

MINUTES – Woodlawn United Church Council September 2nd, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Council Co-Chair Peter Woods called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring WUC follows the recommendations of our federal, provincial and municipal leadership to refrain from public gatherings and meetings, co-chair Peter coordinated a video conference so we may continue the work of Woodlawn United Church.

IN ATTENDANCE VIA VIDEO: Allan Eddy, Barry Zwicker, Bob Watt, Brian Moors, Cathy Kay, Dennis Dean, Helen Dixon, Kerri Graham, Keith Musselman, Rev Mary Lynne Whyte, Paul Whyte, Peter Woods.

COFP TEAM IN ATTENDANCE – Fay Gunter, Jerry Jackson, Maarten Kramers, Stephanie Bennett

REGRETS – Kathy Dean **GUEST** – Fred Evans

OPENING PRAYER: Peter Woods led the meeting in an opening prayer.

AGENDA – One item agenda meeting called by the chair to receive information of the August 27th Zoom meeting between Rev. Tom Woods (Region 15 Pastoral Relations), Rev. David Hewitt (Region 15 Regional Minister), Rev. Linda Yates (Region 15 Liaison), Peter Woods and Kathy Dean (Co-chairs Woodlawn Council), Barry Zwicker (Chair Woodlawn CoFP Team) and Allan Eddy (Woodlawn Council Representative), and to determine an appropriate response.

ATTACHMENT – August 14th email from Rev David Hewitt re: Pastoral Relations motion.
September 1st email from Rev. Linda Yates re: Interim Minister proposal

WELCOME: Peter welcomed all to the meeting and indicated that, while all in attendance were welcome to take part in the discussion, only members of Council would be allowed to make any decisions or recommendations resulting from discussions that may follow.

DISCUSSION – Peter began by stating the purpose of the August 27th meeting was the result of a consensus by the Woodlawn Council during the August 16th meeting that representatives from the Woodlawn Council meet with representatives from Region 15 to determine clarification and the intent contained in a motion from the Regional Pastoral Committee. (The motion from Region 15 Pastoral Relations: *Moved that Region 15 approve the development of an Interim Ministry at Woodlawn United Church, Dartmouth. Development shall include:*

- a. *The current Community of Faith profile preparation team shall develop the Interim Ministry plan in cooperation with Region 15 and then disband.*
- b. *Linda Yates will continue as Region 15 Liaison with Woodlawn until the plan for Interim Ministry is finalized, and receives Region 15 approval.*
- c. *The requirements for Interim Ministry as expressed in the Manual and applicable handbooks of The United Church of Canada will be followed, including the establishment of a Transition Team to work with the Interim Minister during the Interim Ministry.*
- d. *The Appointment of Mary Lynne Whyte will continue for the duration of the Interim Ministry. Mary Lynne will be considered eligible to apply for any permanent positions that may emerge following the Interim Ministry.*

Peter informed the meeting that he has always tried to be ethical and straightforward in dealing with Council business and in his personal life and referenced the following quote from Rev Yates in her Sept 1st email - "Actions by the Woodlawn governing body that seek to circumvent Region 15 motions and requirements would not only raise ethical and legal issues; they may also have an effect on Woodlawn's insurance coverage as all insurance providers assume employees, Staff and clergy have been vetted, called and employed by following an organization's own institutional requirements, in this case United Church of Canada polity". Peter stated emphatically that he would never act in any manner that would lead council in the direction suggested by Rev. Yates.

Peter asked that Barry and Allan present their observation and summary of the meeting.

Barry summarized that the representatives from Woodlawn were told, point blank, that the Pastoral Relations Committee had made their decision, that the CoFP Team were to cease their work and were to redirect their efforts to developing a job description and goals for an Interim Minister and then be disbanded, would not be afforded the opportunity to report to Council nor the congregation and that the Region would appoint two members to a Transition Team. Barry indicated there was no willingness to discuss the proposal suggested by Council and that Woodlawn was being given an ultimatum. (Note: The recommendation from Council was: It was agreed, by consensus, the Council of Woodlawn United recommends to Region 15 that the CoFP Team remain intact, that the CoFP Team is requested to present its draft report by the end of September 2020, that Woodlawn Council will modify its interim minister job description to include interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, and if those skills are not present in any available interim period minister that Woodlawn would hire a minister for the interim period until a 'call' is made to complement the mission and ministry at Woodlawn United, and that council would immediately seek and hire a professional to assist us in a self-examination process.)

Allan supported Barry's observations and stated that his observation was that there was no willingness to work with Woodlawn in any way that did not comply with the motion from the Pastoral Relations Committee. Allan stated the job descriptions submitted by Woodlawn were dismissed 'out of hand' and that they were repletely told there was no middle ground or alternative; that there was only one path to follow and that was the motion as relayed to Woodlawn. Allan also noted that Woodlawn recognized the breakdown in relationship with the Region and was desirous of finding a path to reconciliation. The response from the Region was 'that is were an interim minister would help'.

Peter stated that Rev Woods, in response to being asked how the committee arrived at the motion, initially appeared to indicate that there may be room to negotiate but ultimately stated that they acted on the advice received from Rev Linda Yates. Peter indicated that the tone of the meeting, a complete lack of empathy, was such that it was difficult to imagine the representatives from the Region were all ordained ministers. When asked by Rev Hewitt if Woodlawn was in agreement with the motion, yay or nay, Peter replied by indicating they were only there to obtain clarification and that any response would come from the Council. Peter ended his summarization by saying the meeting was very hurtful and he felt a lot of people have been damaged by the process.

Peter opened the floor for discussion and requested that we stay focused on the purpose of the meeting; i.e. that we develop a response to Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee motion. There resulted a number of questions, a number of expressions of hurt, support for the motion, disappointment with the action of the Region, suggestion that we have no option but to follow the direction of the Region, the suggestion that we have no option but to stand for what we believe in. It was suggested that the Region does have the authority to act as they have but that there may have been a better way. There was suggestion that maybe the Pastoral Relations Committee acted without full knowledge of the Region. It was stated that the members of the CoFP Team could not and would not continue work with Rev. Yates. There was personal expressions that it was difficult to remain part of the United Church. There were concerns that the actions of the Region will make it extremely difficult to find the leadership required to form a Transition Team. There was frustration expressed because the Region was not prepared to dialogue around Woodlawns proposal, that Rev. Yates was to remain the liaison notwithstanding the conflict that already exists. It was stated that it was not known who Rev. Yates was communicating with but that the most of what she stated in her report was inaccurate. It was suggested that interim ministry may be required when a minister serving more than ten year in a pastorate leaves, but it was also noted that Rev. Yates specified that her recommendation was based upon a conversation with someone, someone who she was unwilling to divulge, who said there was a lot of turmoil within the congregation of Woodlawn United. Rev. Yates was unwilling to identify what turmoil she was speaking about. There was concern expressed about a process whereby Council question the authority of the Pastoral Relations Committee and the distinct possibility that Region would agree with the Pastoral Relations Committee. There was also an expressed opinion that information provided by Rev Yates was incorrect and unfounded and Woodlawn should challenge such action. Representatives at the August 27th meeting stated the Region's position, regardless of objection otherwise, that Rev. Yates was and would continue to be the Liaison between the Region and Woodlawn. Among many unanswered questions was, 'why would the Region initiate this action during the time of a pandemic realizing the difficulties of consultation with the congregation'. It was restated that there was a complete lack of compassion from the three clergy members of the Region during the meeting. There was considerable discussion as to whether or not Council should consult the congregation before responding to the Region. It was noted the difficulty in

informing and consulting the congregation because of protocols set during the period of covid, and that Council itself is a cross representation of the congregation and has been attempting to deal with the issue for months.

It was proposed and agreed that Allan draft a letter indicating that Woodlawn Council has been in receipt of the motion and recommendations from the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Region, that we acknowledge the authority vested in the Pastoral Relations Committee to make such recommendations, that the Council of Woodlawn feels the action of the Pastoral Relations Committee is not in the best interest of Woodlawn and state the reasons why, that the relationship with the Region has been severely damaged through this process and reconciliation is in the best interest of both parties, and if Woodlawn is to follow the recommendations from the Pastoral Relations Committee then the Region should arrange a congregational meeting to inform and explain to the congregations the reasons for such action.

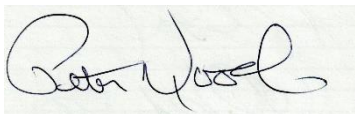
Allan indicated he would draft such a letter, forward it to the chair for approval, then to the Council for final approval and agreement. Ultimately the letter may be forwarded to Rev. Tom Woods with copies to the chair of Region 15 and the moderator at the United Church Head Office.

It was noted that Rev. Yates had indicated that she had spoken with one or two people from our organization who indicated they did not agree with the action of Council. It was stated that the action agreed upon this evening must have full and collective support of Council.

Peter indicated he would communicate with Rev. Woods, with a copy to Rev. Hewitt indicating Council was in the process of formulating a response which would be forthcoming in the near future.

Rev. Mary Lynne spoke with compassion of the distress, discouragement, distrust and passion expressed by members of Council and the CoFP Team and suggested that when we end tonight's meeting that we each spend a few moments listening for the voice of God speaking to each of us.

At 9:30 p.m. Peter closed the meeting as Mary Lynne led in prayer.



Peter Woods – Co-Chair of Council



Submitted by: J Robert Watt – Secretary, WUC Council

ATTACHMENTS**Hewitt, David**12:05 PM (Aug
14, 2020) Rep

to Linda, tomwoods188@gmail.com, Peter, Kathy, Allan, Barry, Bev, me, Brian, catherin ly
e, Helen, Jim, Keith, Kerri, Mary, Paul

Hi Peter,

Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee met this morning, and considered the submissions from Woodlawn United Church and Regional Liaison Linda Yates. Gratitude was expressed for the thoughtful and diligent work done by all, and for the positive Woodlawn response to the Interim proposal. Good work has been done, and there is still more to do. Commitment to and appreciation for Interim Ministry is good to have received, there are still some more details to prepare.

The following motion was passed by the Region 15 Pastoral Relations Committee within their authority and on behalf of the Region:

Moved that Region 15 approve the development of an Interim Ministry at Woodlawn United Church, Dartmouth. Development shall include:

- a. The current Community of Faith profile preparation team shall develop the Interim Ministry plan in cooperation with Region 15 and then disband.*
- b. Linda Yates will continue as Region 15 Liaison with Woodlawn until the plan for Interim Ministry is finalized, and receives Region 15 approval.*
- c. The requirements for Interim Ministry as expressed in the Manual and applicable handbooks of The United Church of Canada will be followed, including the establishment of a Transition Team to work with the Interim Minister during the Interim Ministry.*
- d. The Appointment of Mary Lynne Whyte will continue for the duration of the Interim Ministry. Mary Lynne will be considered eligible to apply for any permanent positions that may emerge following the Interim Ministry.*

It is not unusual for the work of a Profile Team to arrive at the identification of need for Interim Ministry. It is appropriate for the CoFP Team to continue to work on the development of the plan for Interim Ministry, and especially of the goals for the Interim Ministry. The direction for this work is contained within the Interim Ministry Handbooks, and Linda Yates will continue as Liaison and guide to this work. I remain available for consultation, and would be pleased to review any draft documents as this work proceeds to conclusion. Once a complete draft is prepared, it will need to be presented to the congregation for approval, and then on to the Region for approval. All of the work that has been done to date, and the various studies and documents that have been prepared are all valuable contributors towards the objective of establishing the Interim Ministry plan and goals.

Once the Interim Ministry plan and goals are approved, the work of the CoFP Team is over. That team will disband. Linda's role as Liaison will also conclude at that time. A new group related to the Interim Ministry work will be formed, called a Transition Team, with new representation from the Region. This team will conduct the Search and will remain in place to accompany the Interim Minister and Interim Ministry.

I continue to appreciate the sincere commitment to mission and ministry at Woodlawn, and look forward to working with you towards and through Interim Ministry.

In Peace,

Dave

David Hewitt

Regional Minister, Region 15

The United Church of Canada

1-800-268-3781 ext. 6154

From: **Linda Yates** <lindayatesalive@icloud.com>

Date: Tue, Sep 1, 2020 at 4:31 PM

Subject: next steps

To: Barry Zwicker <barry.zwicker50@gmail.com>

Cc: Fay Gunter <FayGunter@hotmail.com>, Kramers, Maarten <maarten_k01@bellaliant.net>, Jerry Jackson <jerryjackson@live.ca>, Don Trider <dtrider72@gmail.com>,

Jamie Masse <masse.jamie@gmail.com>, Tom Woods <tomwoods188@gmail.com>, Hewitt, David <DHewitt@united-church.ca>, Peter Woods <commonkore@gmail.com>

Hello Team

I am looking forward to completing Woodlawn's Interim Ministry Proposal with you. The Region supports the Interim initiative from Woodlawn, and requires a few more details to be developed in order to ensure that the plan is within United Church policy (see handbook). I have attached two handbooks for ease of reference. One is for the Board of Governance. The other is a resource for Transition Teams. Although the Transition Team that will work with the Intentional Interim is yet to be created, the latter handbook gives a fuller picture of what Interim Ministry is about. If some of you are wondering why Interim Ministry is usually called for and what the intent is, please read the handbooks. As I recall, from the very beginning of our time together, the possibility of Interim Ministry was raised. Indeed, I heard from you that this possibility was raised at Council even before the CoF profile team was created.

The content of and anxieties expressed at the meeting on August 27, 2020 of representatives of the Woodlawn Board and representatives of Region 15 confirmed to the Region that Interim Ministry is in the best interests of the congregation of Woodlawn United. The good news is that David Hewitt has offered to also come to your meetings. We appreciate this commitment to Woodlawn's current and future wellbeing, as he is exceptionally busy in his work as Regional Minister.

The Region needs to approve the Interim Proposal goals and then provide two representatives to a Transition Team. Actions by the Woodlawn governing body that seek to circumvent Region 15 motions and requirements would not only raise ethical and legal issues; they may also have an effect on Woodlawn's insurance coverage as all insurance providers assume employees, Staff and clergy have been vetted, called and employed by following an organization's own institutional requirements, in this case United Church of Canada polity.

You have done a great deal of commendable work already. You have the tools and skills needed to create a good proposal that moves Woodlawn into a period of effective Interim Ministry. There is every reason to believe that a period of Interim period of Ministry at Woodlawn will create renewed strength, improved communication and relational processes and a deeper connection to the surrounding community and the United Church.

I look forward to our work together.

Linda Yates

In peace,

Linda Yates

902-452-0858